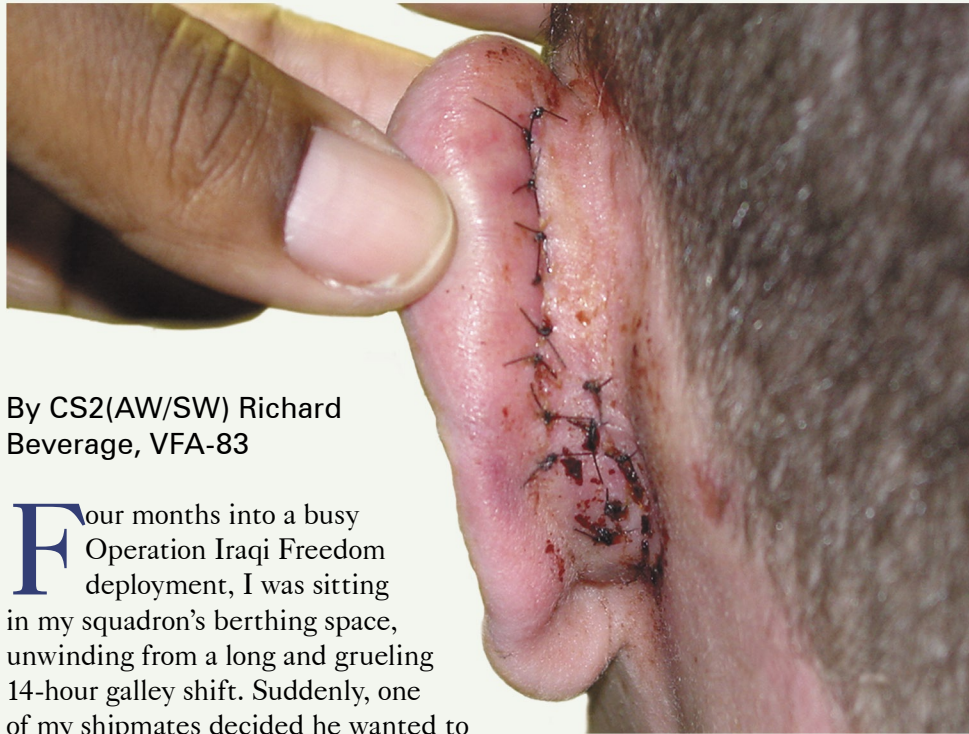


Horseplay: Trouble Looking for a Place To Happen



Here's what the one Sailor's ear looked like after he had been stitched up in medical.

By CS2(AW/SW) Richard Beverage, VFA-83

Four months into a busy Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment, I was sitting in my squadron's berthing space, unwinding from a long and grueling 14-hour galley shift. Suddenly, one of my shipmates decided he wanted to wrestle and grabbed me. Being an ex-wrestling champion in high school, I wanted to show him up to shipmates.

We each were trying to get the upper hand when another squadronmate jumped on top of me. I welcomed the challenge to get them both down but soon had a third shipmate trying to help his buddies. I should have known this three-on-one encounter was headed for trouble.

While I was turning to get one shipmate, another fell into a locker. We all stopped what we were doing and asked if he was OK. He said he was fine but walked out of the berthing space holding his ear. The unauthorized wrestling match ended there, and we went about our business.

We soon learned our injured shipmate's wound was much worse than he realized. A visit to medical revealed his ear was cut in two places. He had to endure four shots of a local anesthetic because each one kept wearing off before the doctor could finish putting 14 stitches in his ear.

Later that afternoon, all four of us had to stand before a disciplinary review board to accept the consequences for our actions. Our injured shipmate lost two workdays and spent

seven more on light duty, which had a negative effect on an already short-handed and overworked workcenter. His co-workers had to pick up the slack because of our mistakes. Because of our stupid behavior, we temporarily lost a valuable human resource and thus gave the enemy a victory without their ever having to lift a finger.

As the senior person involved, I should have been part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. Horseplay degrades readiness and morale and goes against everything our core values stand for. We are fortunate the shipmate wasn't injured seriously. What starts as harmless fun can turn tragic in an instant, especially aboard ship. It's important that all leaders do their job and stop this activity anytime they see it happening. **S**

While I was reading this Sailor's account, I remembered another incident of horseplay I had read a few days earlier. That story follows.—Ed.